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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 27, 2003

¶11. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for February 27, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICS, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

¶12. Evrensel/Hurriyet: PKK/KADEK leader Abdullah Ocalan, who had not been able to meet with his family and lawyers for 12 weeks, was granted the chance this week. The meeting did not come off, however. His lawyers from Asrin Hukuk Burosu -- Dogan Erbas, Firat Aydinkaya, and Aysel Tugluk - along with his sister, Hava Keser, came to Gemlik and boarded the Turkish-government's boat for Imrali island, where Ocalan is imprisoned. Halfway between Gemlik and Imrali, the seas became rough, and the boat turned around. According to Hurriyet, a five-page report giving information about PKK/KADEK's situation and prospects in the event of war on Iraq was found sandwiched between newspapers that were being carried by attorney Aysel Tugluk for Ocalan. Tugluk explained that the report might have been put among the papers by employees at the legal office. The papers reported several incidents throughout the region protesting either war and/or Ocalan's isolation, including Van, Diyarbakir, and Gaziantep.

¶13. Radikal/Cumhuriyet/Hurriyet: The final list of candidates who will run in the by elections in Siirt on March 9 was published in the Official Gazette. The ticket is as follows:
TKP (Turkish Communist Party) candidates:
Muharrem Mirik, Emine Serpil Renda, Deniz Unver.
IP (Labor Party) candidates: Zeki Karahan, Yusuf Celik, Bayram Yurtcicek.
CHP (Republican Peoples Party) candidates: Ekrem Bilek, Abdulhalim Cinar, Abdurrahman Kaysi.
AKP (Justice and Development Party) candidate:
Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Oner Gulyesil, Oner Ergenc.
According to Hurriyet, HADEP has offered conditional support to CHP in by elections in Siirt province. CHP's Vice Chairman, Cevdet Selvi, said HADEP officials told him that if CHP's chair, Deniz Baykal made an announcement criticizing Abdullah Ocalan's isolation in Imrali and his not being allowed to meet with his family members, CHP would find great sympathy among their ranks and files. Selvi said HADEP supporters would vote for CHP in masses if such an announcement were made.

¶14. Radikal: Gas mask are seen in the shop windows of Iskenderun. The shopkeepers said there was a demand for the masks which are sold for TL 300 million. Demand is strongest from factories and other large installations.

¶15. Turkiye/Milli Gazete/Bolge: As the United States gets ready for war on Iraq, the military bases and airbases in Turkey also became very active. There was a heavy air traffic at Incirlik AB from evening till early morning yesterday. Two tanker planes, one cargo plane, and one Prowler landed at the base during morning hours. It is reported that some American dependents have started leaving the base. Modernization projects at Tasucu port in Silifke (Mersin) continue at full speed. In Batman, 50 heavy-duty construction vehicles rented by the US have deployed to Batman airport in order to begin infrastructure work for the construction of 5000 prefab houses to be used as military barracks. It is gathered that the US has rented a large number

of tanker trucks to supply its need for aircraft fuel there. More than 10 cargo planes have ferried in military equipment to Diyarbakir Military Airport in the last three days.

16. **Turkiye/Dunya:** Turkey recalled its Ambassador from Iraq. Ambassador Osman Paksut has returned to Ankara and closed the embassy building in Baghdad, as a precaution against uncontrolled activities that would erupt. Meanwhile, Turkey has sealed its Habur Border Gate for any entry or exit. Turkish employees working for contracting firms in Iraq and truckers currently in Iraq were warned to return to Turkey. More than 12,000 trucks are reported to be engaged in transportation between Turkey and Iraq.

17. **Cumhuriyet:** As talks that started on Saturday between Americans and Turks continue, 80 US ships carrying military vehicles and equipment await off-shore in the Mediterranean. It is reported that the ships carry combat materiel that will be used in the operation. M1 tanks, missile ramps, and other armored equipment are among the ships' cargoes, which can only be discharged after signing of the military MOU. The MOU on economic and political issues is expected to be signed before the Turkish National Assembly's approval, while the one concerning military issues is expected to be signed after TNA's approval.

18. **Milliyet:** The Turkish Armed Forces started building a direct road from Uludere to northern Iraq. The Uludere road will be connected to the Zavita military area which will be built between Amediye and Akre regions. It is gathered that the road between Zakho and Dohuk is also being repaired, and mobile bridges have been erected at designated military transit points.

19. **Turkiye:** The Mersin Security Directorate disclosed that, based on a tip, they seized a handwritten, foldable, leather-bound historical Pentateuch in Hebrew. Its estimated value is said to be 300,000 dollars. One person was arrested in connection with the seizure.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

110. **Turkiye:** Chamber of Commodity Exchange (CCE) of Adana wants to plant the kind of cotton that can be harvested by machine. Eray Akile, CCE secretary, said CCE is going to undersign a

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memorandum of understanding with Adana's Cukurova University to develop high-yield cotton that can be machine picked and is suitable for the climatic conditions of the Cukurova region.
HOLTZ